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ABSTRACT

This report begins with a general description and highlights of the proceedings of the Youth Corps Exchange Project workshop which dealt with problems of recruitment to the corps and which was the first of six related workshops held during the 1986-87 period. Discussed in the report's second section are the following issues related to corpsmember recruitment: low visibility, lack of diversity, minimum wage, and attrition. The third section presents national and local strategies for dealing with these four problems. The following possibilities are discussed for dealing with low visibility: contacting local groups, using the media, targeting advertising, looking for volunteer help, having everyone recruit, and being comprehensive. Program design, targeted advertising, office location, and sensitivity are all discussed in terms of dealing with the problems caused by a lack of diversity. It is suggested that recruiters emphasize the youth corps' long-term benefits and goals and total benefit package as a way of dealing with the fact that the program offers only a minimum wage. Prescreening, developing a training program, expanding members' horizons, and celebrating corpsmembers are all examined from the standpoint of reducing attrition. The final section describes the action plans that have been developed by the following organizations to improve their corpsmember recruitment programs: The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Minnesota Conservation Corps, Michigan Youth Corps, Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps, Greater Atlanta Conservation Corps, Los Angeles Conservation Corps, Marine Conservation Corps, Maryland Conservation Corps, Wisconsin Conservation Corps, and the A-Team. (MN)

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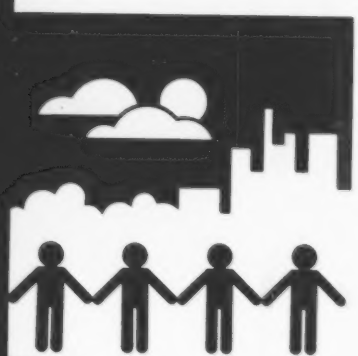

Recruitment: Maintaining Corpsmember Strength

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Youth Corps Exchange Project 1986-1987 Workshops

Recruitment: Maintaining Corpsmember Strength

by Linda Jucovy

March 1987

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FOREWORD

"Recruitment: Maintaining Corpsmember Strength" was the first of the 1986-87 series of workshops sponsored by the Youth Corps Exchange Project, organized by Public/Private Ventures and funded by The Ford Foundation.

The six workshops in the series bring together planners and operators of youth conservation and service corps -- and experts from related fields -- to exchange information on subjects crucial to the development of corps programs. Since they are often geographically isolated from one another, youth corps practitioners can use the workshops to explore a variety of ways to strengthen their programs and learn what others are doing in areas of mutual concern.

We are particularly grateful to the resource people who brought their expertise to bear on youth corps challenges, and to all the participants who shared their experiences and enthusiasm. Many said they were both relieved and energized by the opportunity to tell and hear about common problems, and to offer suggestions to each other.

Jim Klasen
Coordinator
Youth Corps Exchange Project

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I. THE CONFERENCE

> **"It's like walking through the forest. Sometimes you're so in the thick of things you can't see which direction you're going. It's good to just get away and see it from outside the woods."**
>
> **Ray Burkhart, the A(rundel) Team**

The Youth Corps Exchange Project's workshop, "Recruitment: Maintaining Corpsmember Strength," was held at a conference center on the edge of a forest, and it gave participants a chance to spend a few days removed from their individual woods: to step back from the "dailiness" of running their programs and examine youth corps recruitment with others from around the country who share similar concerns.

From October 20 to 22, the 27 participants, including representatives from 14 corps, met at the Wilder Forest Conference Center in Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota. The workshop began with discussions about such general recruitment issues as creating an accurate public perception of the corps and attracting a diverse group of applicants. It was soon clear that retention and attrition would become key topics in the workshop. Youth who drop out of a program are lost recruits, and the need to replace them is an additional burden on recruiters.

Once this broader context was established, participants turned to some specific problems of individual corps. In the final session, small groups met to create at least the seeds of recruitment plans that might blossom for the 10 programs that are profiled at the end of this report.

Highlights of the workshop included:

- An address by Don Fraser, Mayor of Minneapolis. Fraser, who is also co-chair of the Minnesota Task Force on Youth Service and Work, noted that there is no single place to intervene in young people's lives: every stage of development is important. He spoke about youth programs already under way in Minnesota and about his vision of a comprehensive system that would provide support for disadvantaged youth from before birth (prenatal health care) to young adulthood (youth service corps and work internships). The Minnesota Task Force has formulated a youth service plan that it will soon propose to the state. According to Fraser, the key to such programs is fostering a sense in youth that they are giving something

back to the community. He considers it unlikely that the federal government will provide support for youth programs; that will have to come through state and local governments.

- A presentation by Bernard J. McMullan of Public/Private Ventures. He focused on the generic restraints that affect recruitment: program design (for example, a mother with young children will not enter a residential program); demographics (a corps can't have diversity if there is no diversity in the population it serves); location and transportation (if the work is in the middle of a forest, how will people get there?); job environment (what is the pay? what could a possible recruit earn elsewhere?), and legislative mandates.

- An inspirational talk by Robert Burkhardt, director of the San Francisco Conservation Corps, which included his dramatic reading of Marge Piercy's poem, "To Be Of Use." Burkhardt's approach to recruitment and retention combines toughness, imagination and energy. If corpsmembers break a rule, they are immediately fired. But, at the same time, Burkhardt uses dozens of imaginative ways to recruit youth into the corps and to make the experience worthwhile and even exciting. "You have to be tireless in teaching other people about your organization," he said.

- Help from "resource" people outside the staffs of individual corps. They included Peg Rosenberry of the Human Environment Center; Deborah Riddle of the Peace Corps and Service America; Howard A. Berry and Linda A. Chisholm, co-directors of The Partnership for Service Learning; and Martha Merrill, Dean of Humanities at Morris County (N.J.) Community College.

- The screening of promotional videos from the Michigan Youth Corps, Marin Conservation Corps and California Conservation Corps (CCC). The 30-second CCC video was professionally produced at a cost of $40,000, and participants watched it with awe and a little envy.

- Small group meetings. In these sessions, participants examined the ideas that had been generated during the earlier sessions and tried to apply those ideas specifically to recruitment problems in their own programs.

The following report attempts to present the content that emerged during those three days in Minnesota. It begins with a discussion of some of the larger issues of recruitment, examines possible solutions, and then presents a series of tentative action plans dealing with specific recruitment problems of particular youth corps. The report concludes with some suggestions for formulating a comprehensive recruitment policy.

The hope is that both those who attended the workshop and youth corps staff members who could not attend will be able to use this report to help guide them through the often complex problems they face and the decisions they must make in developing a recruitment plan.

II. THE ISSUES

"There are no recruitment experts."

Jim Klasen, Public/Private Ventures

Workshop participants quickly realized that no single recruitment plan could work for them all; their corps are too diverse. The programs range in size from the Michigan Youth Corps, which hopes to have 25,000 youths in its 1987 summer program, to the A-Team in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, which currently has 10 corpsmembers. They range in geographical scope from the California Conservation Corps, with over 2,000 corpsmembers in 17 residential sites and 24 non-residential satellites across the state, to urban corps, like those in Los Angeles and Atlanta, which serve a single city. Obviously, their recruitment needs differ widely. The CCC recruits 400 youths a month while, for example, Kate McClain of the Marin Conservation Corps, also in California, says she can go for weeks without gaining a single recruit.

In addition, some programs target specific groups of youth. All recruits to the Michigan Civilian Conservation Corps must be recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children or General Assistance. Other corps are untargeted and aim for some socioeconomic diversity. Thus, the City Volunteer Corps in New York City would like to attract a larger number of middle class youth. Not surprisingly, the corps have a wide variety of program designs and missions. Some are residential; in others, corpsmembers live at home. Some corps aim to have recruits stay a year; others are six- to eight-week summer programs.

In some corps, the focus is on service: what youth can give back to their community. In other corps, the focus is on preparation for employment. These corps may emphasize teaching employability skills or specific job skills; they may offer G.E.D. classes or college courses. Some programs have a highly-structured educational component. Some just encourage corpsmembers to attend classes at night. Others have no education program at all.

Still, with all this diversity, many of the participating corps faced the same general recruitment problems.

LOW VISIBILITY

All the participants agreed that recruitment is an ongoing process. They need to keep an accurate image of their program in the public's eye, and they have to market their program continuously in order to maintain a pool of good recruits. Everyone was looking for promotion and marketing techniques.

LACK OF DIVERSITY

The almost universal corps cry is, "We need more women!" But some programs have other needs. The Atlanta corps has a waiting list of women; they are looking for a few good men. Marin is looking for minorities; Los Angeles seeks white males and females. The City Volunteer Corps wants to attract more Hispanic females.

Howard Berry, co-director of The Partnership for Service Learning, challenged the participants to think more deeply about the issue of diversity when he asked, "Is there really a problem? Why do you need more women?" He questioned whether diversity was an inherent good for the programs or an ideological need in the minds of youth corps administrators.

Many participants responded that they have a philosophical reason for seeking diversity among their recruits: one of their goals is to have youths overcome prejudices -- whether racial, sexist or socio-economic -- and learn to respect and work cooperatively with others. They contended that everyone benefits from an intercultural atmosphere.

MINIMUM WAGE

Almost all of the corps pay the minimum wage, $3.35 an hour. This creates some practical recruitment problems. In Maryland, for example, McDonald's pays youth more than $4.00 an hour. The Maryland Conservation Corps, a summer program, finds it hard to compete. Enos Flores, area manager at the San Bernadino Center of the California Conservation Corps, lamented what he calls the "earn, not learn" short-sightedness that leads youth to earn a little more money by spending a summer packaging hamburgers in styrofoam containers instead of performing worthwhile conservation work and learning important job skills.

Some participants also mentioned the psychological effect that earning the minimum wage has on youth: it hurts their self-esteem.

ATTRITION

Recruitment means more than getting youth into a corps: it means keeping them, too -- if not for the full length of a program, at least long enough so that the members gain some benefits and so that the program isn't plagued by constant turnover. Robert Burkhardt, director of the San Francisco Conservation Corps (SFCC), identified what he called the three phases of recruitment: attracting youth, training them, and retaining them. Women, for example, seem the most likely to drop out of a program during the training period; but once they get past those first few days, they tend to remain in the corps for substantial periods of time. Some participants felt that black males have the highest attrition

rates once the training is over and the work actually begins. Although Burkhardt claims his corps has a "kick-them-in-the-ass-and-don't-worry-about-attrition" approach, nearly all the participants were looking for ways to cut down on attrition -- or at least to lengthen the corpsmembers' average length of service.

III. THE STRATEGIES

"Think...imagine...create."

Robert Burkhardt, San Francisco Conservation Corps

Since there is so much diversity among the corps, no one strategy will work for all of them. And a strategy that might be successful for a particular corps at one time might prove a failure for that same corps at another. But participants shared numerous practical approaches that have worked for their corps and could work for others. There were also some more theoretical ideas that hadn't necessarily been tried but seemed potentially useful in a wide range of corps.

This section looks at these strategies as they apply to the four major recruitment issues discussed in the previous chapter. A later section, "The Plans," will focus on particular recruitment issues faced by some of the corps.

LOW VISIBILITY

All the participants were looking for ways to make the public more aware of their programs. Since very few youth corps have a recruitment budget, they are dependent upon hard work and imagination to draw attention to themselves and establish a pool of recruits. As SFCC director Robert Burkhardt told the group, "You have to try out a new idea every day."

National Possibilities

Many of the workshop participants said they would like to have a generic video and radio tape to use for public service announcements. They could simply plug the phone number of their specific corps into the end of the video or tape. They similarly urged the production of "generic" posters and billboard signs. Having these materials produced for them would obviously save the individual corps a lot of time and money -- and it could also create a unified national image for the youth corps.

Participants requested help from several organizations in producing these materials: Service America, in Washington, D.C., which is developing a national plan for public awareness of youth corps; the Human Environment Center, also in Washington, and Public/Private Ventures, in Philadelphia.

A few participants had bigger ideas. "What we need," said one, "is for Hollywood to produce a movie where the main characters are in a youth corps. That will create a lot of interest."

Local Possibilities

Participants suggested a variety of ways that individual corps can increase their visibility.

1. Contact local groups. Communicate with community-based organizations, religious groups, schools and legislators to find the best places for presentations and sources of referrals. One participant said she finds the local PTAs very useful: they make it easy for her to talk about her program in school assemblies and individual classrooms. The CCC keeps in touch with local military recruiters, who have stricter standards than the corps, and gets referrals from them of youth who are not yet eligible to join the armed forces. They might lack a high school diploma or be overweight, for example, and the military recruiter will feel that a year in the CCC will get them ready. According to the CCC's Jim Sale, this arrangement works well for everybody. The CCC gains a member, and the military retains a potential recruit.

2. Use the media. Most corps can't afford to produce a video, but everyone can create radio tapes to use as public service announcements. Obtain lists of the media in your area: these include all radio (and television) stations and the names of those stations' public service contacts.

In addition to the daily papers, weekly community newspapers can be a good source of publicity. Send in press releases to papers in communities where you are trying to recruit, and send a black and white photo of new corpsmembers to their local papers. Community newspapers usually have small staffs; they are often looking for ideas and copy. Contact the editors about doing a feature on a corpsmember from that community.

3. Target your advertising. Find out why people have joined your corps (job skills? education? service? a chance to get away from home?) and market your program on the basis of those attractions. The U.S. Army used to sell itself as an opportunity for travel and adventure. Now its ads stress educational benefits because market research has shown this to be the most successful appeal.

Similarly, find out where youth congregate and put your flyers and posters there. Carlene Henderson, of the East Bay Conservation Corps (EBCC), likes to put flyers in skateboard stores.

4. Look for volunteer help. One participant suggested contacting local colleges and universities. They might be a good source of skilled and hard-working students who can help with recruitment. Students from communications and journalism departments can write press releases and newsletters, create other promotional material and help get that material out to the public. Students from film departments can produce videos.

Students are often eager to do this work because it gives them practical job experience and something solid to put on their resumes.

5. Have everyone recruit. A number of participants stressed the importance of having corpsmembers give presentations in the community. They can speak most honestly and concretely about the experience of being in a youth corps.

One of the mottoes of the CCC is "Everyone recruits every day." CCC corpsmembers and staff are always ready to talk about themselves and hand out promotional literature. Members of the staff keep flyers and brochures in their cars to pass out to anyone who seems interested in the corps.

However, Mamusu Tinson of the Los Angeles Youth Corps and Lyn Carmichael of the Atlanta Corps both expressed reservations about the "everyone recruits every day" philosophy. Their programs are new, and they worry that having too many recruiters will result in an inconsistent message getting out into the community and an inconsistent image of their corps being created.

6. Be comprehensive. The California Conservation Corps exemplifies a wide-ranging marketing plan. It includes use of the media (a recruitment film, public service announcements, newspaper ads, publicity for special events, billboards and ads on buses); work site advertising (signs at project sites, logo decals and vehicle lettering, and uniforms for staff and corpsmembers); outreach material (posters, postcards, brochures, information folders with their logo, slide shows and videos); and exhibits and presentations (at fairs and expositions, job fairs, schools and shopping malls).

LACK OF DIVERSITY

Diversity among corpsmembers is a goal for most corps, but sometimes it just is not possible. Some corps are limited by legislative mandate, including restrictions attached to the funds they receive. Other corps are limited by the demographics of the area they serve. Everyone agreed that it is necessary to have a diverse staff to attract diverse members. All corps tend to attract new recruits similar to the corpsmembers they already have.

Still, strategies emerged that can help individual corps market themselves to a more diverse population.

Program Design

Corps have to recognize that the type of program they offer might limit the kinds of youth they attract. Thus, in some cases, individual corps may have to consider altering their program design if they want to become more diverse. Obviously, single

mothers are unlikely to enter a residential program. But there are also more subtle barriers.

While some corps, like the one in Los Angeles, successfully sell themselves to women because they promise training in non-traditional skills, other programs have trouble finding women who want to do physical outdoor work. Similarly, the cultural beliefs of some Asians can make this kind of work unattractive to them. Greg Fawcett, of New York's City Volunteer Corps (CVC), noted that mandatory exercise and physical work with crews reminds Cambodians of what they have escaped in their own country. To attract these groups, corps might consider adding work in human services to the outdoor conservation work they already offer.

Other corps might want to strengthen their educational incentives as a way to appeal to a more diverse group of recruits. The CVC recently did this in an effort to attract more people who have completed high school and plan to go to college.

Martha Merrill, a dean at Morris County (N.J.) Community College, stressed the importance of the "community college connection." Offering recruits the chance to take community college courses can significantly enhance a program's appeal.

Targeted Advertising

Participants suggested a variety of ways to reach specific groups of potential recruits. For example, place ads and flyers where the people you are trying to attract will be. Carlene Henderson of the EBCC said she put her flyers where women are most likely to see them: on grocery store bulletin boards, in clothes shops, in women's restrooms at rock concerts. If you are trying to recruit Hispanics (or Asians, etc.), have public service announcements on radio stations that the target group listens to. When you are specifically recruiting women, take a woman -- especially a woman corpsmember -- with you when you make a presentation. If you are specifically recruiting Hispanics, take a Hispanic with you, and so on.

Office Location

The physical location of the corps office can send out a message about whom you are trying to attract to your program. This seems particularly true in urban corps. Doug Roberts of the Sacramento Local Conservation Corps was concerned that his recruits come almost entirely from the southern part of Sacramento, where his office is located. Sometimes this problem can be solved by setting up satellite offices in different parts of a city.

Sensitivity

Try to find out why you are having trouble recruiting from certain groups and deal with those cultural differences. The CVC discovered that they were unable to attract many Hispanic women because those women came from very protective homes. CVC staff found that it was useful to go out and talk to the families about their program.

MINIMUM WAGE

A few participants felt that if recruits are more concerned about wages than benefits, then it might be possible to decrease the amount of money spent on benefits and use those funds to increase the hourly wage, however slightly. For corps that do offer good benefits, like health insurance and paid vacations and holidays, recruiters can point to that total package. But a more universal possibility is to "sell" the program on what it is rather than on what it pays.

Participants suggested that recruiters emphasize the program's long-term goals. The corps is more than a job to tide people over for a few months. It teaches members how to work and trains them in specific job skills. Some corps also have essential education components that include life skills, G.E.D. classes and community college courses. And while members are gaining all of this, they are performing a service, giving something back to the community. The corps can be a turning point in a youth's life.

ATTRITION

Everyone agreed that strategies for retaining members should be part of any recruitment plan. Program design can contribute to attrition. Find out why corpsmembers leave. Their answers may lead you to make some adjustments in the design of your program.

Some participants questioned why so many of the corps have programs that are a year long. P/PV's Bernard McMullan suggested examining the length of a corps program. Perhaps "gates" would be a good alternative. In that approach, a program might have a "gate" after three or six months. Corpsmembers could leave then with a sense of completion, but there would also be incentives like increased pay or a scholarship to encourage them to stay.

There will always be attrition, and some of it is positive: members get jobs in the private sector, for example. But there are ways to decrease the less positive attrition rates. The SFCC's Robert Burkhardt uses the phrase, "Belong, Empower, Celebrate" to encapsulate ways that programs can maintain their appeal to members.

Prescreening

Kate McClain of the Marin Conservation Corps noted that during recruitment and orientation, it is important to find out what the young person's goals are and to see if they match the program's. In some cases, a youth may be better off not joining. After talking to potential members, McClain is willing to tell them, `Maybe this isn't the right niche for you.' "I'm sure I lose a lot of people," she said, "but sometimes they end up coming anyway because I've challenged them."

Training Program

The CCC motto used to be "Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions." But now it is "Hard work, low pay, miserable conditions...and more." That addition suggests a shift in approach, a realization that the program has to have some sensitivity to its recruits. CCC corps leaders are trained to be aware that recruits often feel depressed and a little scared when they arrive at the program's academy for their training period. During training, the CCC sets aside time for female recruits to meet in groups and talk about how they feel. They have produced a video specifically aimed at helping women get through the training session.

One local corps takes new recruits to various work sites to give them a broader picture of the work that goes on and the people who are doing that work. Whatever strategies an individual corps might use, it is important to recognize how uncomfortable a recruit might feel during the first few days in a program.

Expanding Members' Horizons

There are a variety of ways to make members feel part of a larger community. The CCC has an exchange program with England. In the Bay Area, various youth corps recently spent a day working together in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Other corps can adapt this strategy by arranging work projects with members of community groups. (Working alongside community groups in this way is also an effective way to get some good publicity and advertise your corps.) Carlene Henderson of the EBCC offers a women's studies course as part of her educational program. The course, she says, gives her female corpsmembers a sense of empowerment.

Celebrate Your Corpsmembers

Some participants suggested putting up bulletin boards with members' pictures on them and putting up pictures of former members with captions telling what jobs they have moved into. Some corps give out awards: one offers "The Order Of The Purple

Hardhat." Other corps give attendance awards and safety awards. Awards can be something the youth can enjoy: one corps gets local pizza parlors to give free pizzas to the winners.

Everyone agreed that they should do whatever they could to make the corpsmembers feel important. Give framed certificates when recruits complete their training. Take them on outings. For example, members of the Maryland Conservation Corps, who work on restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, go on special outings that include fishing and sailing. Remember that many of your corpsmembers may not have had much in their lives to feel good about.

IV. THE PLANS

> **"We have to find creative ways to do things because we don't have money."**
>
> **Mamusu Tinson, Los Angeles Conservation Corps"**

On the final morning of the workshop, participants met in three small groups to examine specific recruitment problems in some individual corps. The discussions resulted in 10 potential action plans for dealing with immediate, sometimes short-term problems. Although most often the plans dealt with specific strategies for attracting recruits, in many cases they brought into focus the relationship between program design and recruitment.

The 10 action plans are presented here; a suggested way of thinking about a complete recruitment policy will follow in the final chapter.

VERMONT YOUTH CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representative: Tom Hark
Issues Discussed: Recruiting women, developing a recruitment plan

THE PROGRAM

The VYCC, begun in 1986, is a summer program that in its first year employed 36 youths, ages 16 to 21. Corpsmembers usually work out of residential camps and earn $3.35 an hour for the eight-week work session. Director Tom Hark plans to employ 120 youths during the summer of 1987; and, by 1991, he envisions a program with a summer work force of 500 and a year-round force of 120.

The corps was established by the Vermont legislature. In 1986, a quarter of its funding came from private sources (primarily New England Telephone) and the rest from JTPA funds. Hark is developing a program that he hopes will dramatically increase private contributions and result in having a corporate sponsor for each VYCC crew.

THE PROBLEM

1. The VYCC wants to recruit more women corpsmembers and crew leaders. Hark would like 50 percent of the crew leaders to be women: he thinks they would be good role models for the female corpsmembers and help break stereotypes and overcome prejudices of the male corpsmembers. He also envisions some all-female crews. But last summer only 25 percent of his recruits were women.

   Hark feels some urgency about establishing a good male/female ratio now. It is difficult to change the public's perception of a program. If the VYCC is seen primarily as a place for male youth, then they are the people the program will attract.

2. Because the program is so new, Hark doesn't yet have a concrete recruitment plan. He wants to develop one that will also work in future years as the program expands.

THE POSSIBILITIES

1. Think about what the program has to offer women. A job? A challenge? Adventure? A chance to get away from home? Ask the women who were in the program why they joined; then use those appeals in your promotional material.

   When East Bay's Carlene Henderson recruits a woman, she asks that new recruit for the names of two female friends who might be interested in the youth corps. Henderson

asks the new recruit to speak to those friends and, about a week later, also contacts them herself. Group members felt this approach could work well in other corps, too.

(Also see the discussion in "Some Strategies for Recruitment": put promotional materials in locations where women tend to be; take women -- especially women corpsmembers -- with you when you recruit.)

2. No one could lay out a complete recruitment plan for the corps' long-term needs, but there were suggestions to help Hark get started. The VYCC now offers small college scholarships. As the program prepares to go year-round, it should enlarge its scope to include a strong education component which offers both G.E.D. and some college classes.

   Participants also suggested that Hark contact high school counselors to obtain lists of dropouts and then call them or send them information about the corps. He could also contact community colleges to find students who are looking for work-study programs. (See "Some Strategies for Recruitment" for additional ideas.)

MINNESOTA CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representative: Peg Brown
Issues Discussed: Recruiting corpsmembers for rural assignments, improving relationship with state government

THE PROGRAM

The MCC is a small (75 corpsmembers), year-round program for youths 18 to 26 years old. By legislative mandate, it is administered by the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and performs all of its work for that department. The MCC is a work program; there is no educational component.

THE PROBLEM

Supply and demand don't match. The corps has long waiting lists in heavily populated areas but has to scramble for crew members on projects in rural areas. Peg Brown would like to set up a plan for the staff to reach people who have never heard of the MCC, a promotional plan that will broaden the potential applicant pool.

THE POSSIBILITIES

The group members felt that the MCC has some more basic problems to work out before it can begin planning a promotional campaign. Specifically, the corps needs to establish a firmer program design.

The corps was described as part of Minnesota's large Department of Natural Resources. Although, the MCC has additional youth development goals, DNR's primary goal is simply to have the job done as well and as quickly as possible.

Participants suggested that the Minnesota corps form political alliances both at the DNR and with other state officials. They have to view themselves as a valuable resource for the DNR and work at making themselves a higher priority within the department.

More specific suggestions included:

- Producing a newsletter and other promotional material to send to state legislators, commissioners and other officials to make them more aware of the work the MCC is performing.
- Discovering other goals of the DNR, such as public education about conservation, that the corps can help fulfill.
- Working out an agreement with the state park

system to do more work where corpsmembers are already available.

- Adding an educational component, including community college courses, to the program design. This will both attract more recruits and give the MCC an additional group of people -- educators -- with whom to form an alliance.

MICHIGAN YOUTH CORPS

Workshop Representative: Debra Nolan
Issues Discussed: Recruiting large numbers of corpsmembers

THE PROGRAM

In 1986, this non-residential summer program served 12,500 youth, ages 18 to 21. In 1987, it plans to double in size to 25,000 corpsmembers. According to Deborah Nolan, the program is "pretty bare bones": the kids get a job and go to work for six to eight weeks. The program for 1987 is still in the process of being designed.

THE PROBLEM

Nolan was concerned about the potentially massive problems involved in recruiting 25,000 youth. She was also looking for ways to attract more women into the program.

THE POSSIBILITIES

The group suggested that the MYC first examine the more basic issue of program design as a way to attract recruits. Last year's program did not seem to emphasize work crews and not all of the work seemed particularly useful.

Vermont's Tom Hark said that the essence of a youth corps lies in three attributes: small groups; strong, energetic leaders; and quality projects that have a real impact on the community. A "quality" project will have some skills-building or educational value and some long-term results. Don't pick up trash, he advised: build a park instead. But, he added, almost any project can be useful if it is approached properly and the learning is "intentionalized"; someone must explain to the crew the larger context of what they are doing. Pulling weeds, for example, can become a lesson in ecology.

The group also urged the MYC to try to give corpsmembers some choice in the kind of work they do. Set up the application form so it gives information about the program and offers youth an opportunity to indicate their preferences. Try to find a wide variety of work projects, including both physical outdoor work and human services. And begin recruiting as soon as possible.

(Specific suggestions for recruiting women are included in "Some Strategies for Recruitment" and the section on the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps.)

MICHIGAN CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representative: Debra Nolan
Issues Discussed: Recruiting welfare recipients

THE PROGRAM

This year-round program has slots for 500 corpsmembers, ages 18-25. All of them must be receiving Aid to Families With Dependent Children or General Assistance when hired. The corps is primarily non-residential, but about 100 of the members are in a residential program. All work is related to conservation.

THE PROBLEM

How can the corps attract welfare recipients?

THE POSSIBILITIES

The entire group said, "Stress the educational component!" That is what offers potential recruits the most hope for the future. The corps was encouraged to include life skills (like money management) and G.E.D. classes, and to think about making connections with community colleges so corpsmembers can eventually take courses there.

GREATER ATLANTA CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representative: Lyn Carmichael
Issues Discussed: The need for clear program goals, recruitment of men and a more ethnically and geographically diverse enrollment.

THE PROGRAM

The Greater Atlanta Conservation Corps (GACC), begun in July 1986, has 19 members and wants to expand to 30. Its original program ran for 10 to 13 weeks, but that is increasing: new recruits will be able to stay for up to 16 weeks. The corps is non-residential and performs restoration and conservation work. Wednesdays are set aside for education, including job placement, career development, and G.E.D., junior college and vocational classes.

THE PROBLEMS

1. Since the Atlanta corps is so new, not all staff members are yet aware of the focus and goals of the program. The result, according to Lyn Carmichael, is that "everyone is going in a different direction right now."

2. The corps has a waiting list for women while only about 30 percent of the recruits are men. GACC feels it is competing with the airport, where males can earn as much as eight dollars an hour, even without a high school diploma.

   There are also problems recruiting from other ethnic and racial groups, including Hispanics, Asians and white males and females: Atlanta is approximately 60 percent black. Carmichael said she just recruited the first white member in October.

   In addition, the corps would like to recruit members from a larger geographical area; they are looking for people from outside the city of Atlanta.

THE POSSIBILITIES

Group members urged that the Atlanta staff clarify its mission as a first step in addressing recruitment problems. Without a clearly stated mission, it is difficult to know what people they are trying to attract. Is it a work program? (Carmichael said that's what the crew leaders believe.) Or is it a youth program, with an emphasis on job and educational development?

Atlanta needs to be aware of any provisions of its program design that might restrict recruitment. Then the staff has to get

together and specify the program's goals. Suzanne Anderson of the CCC stressed that this work has to be done right away and all of the staff has to be aware of the program design and goals. "Make sure that everyone is working on the same page," she said. Only then will the corps be ready to develop a recruitment plan.

LOS ANGELES CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representative: Mamusu Tinson
Issues Discussed: Achieving ethnic diversity

THE PROGRAM

This year-round, non-residential corps, begun in April 1986, currently has 40 slots but hopes to expand to 80 or 90. According to its mission statement, corpsmembers' work can focus on conservation, building renovation and human services. But right now nearly all the work is related to conservation.

THE PROBLEM

LACC wants to have an intercultural atmosphere with racial and ethnic diversity among the corpsmembers. But the corps' office is located in a Hispanic and black area of the city, and that is the population they are attracting. In particular, they are having a problem attracting Asians.

Mamusu Tinson said she doesn't have a problem recruiting women because she lets them know they will learn skills that are non-traditional for females and that will pay better than secretarial jobs. Tinson also does not consider the $3.35/hour pay to be a problem.

THE POSSIBILITIES

Jim Klasen suggested that the Los Angeles corps ask, "Is there something flawed in our recruitment strategy, or is this what our population is going to be?" Other participants made suggestions that might help the corps recruit a more diverse group of members:

- Connect with different neighborhoods. Reach out to community groups so they can help you analyze the cultural barriers between the corps and the groups you are trying to attract.

- Consider some changes in program design that could help attract Asians. According to its original mission, LACC could offer work in human services, but it does not. Greg Fawcett of New York's City Volunteer Corps suggested adding human services as a work alternative. Based on his experiences, he felt that Asians might be more willing to consider a program that offered this choice. If the corps does not yet have the resources to establish this work component, they could consider establishing some human service internships for individual corpsmembers.

- There are no whites living in the area where LACC has its office. If LACC seems to be a "black corps," then whites will be hesitant to join. Kate McClain, of the Marin Conservation Corps, suggested establishing a work site in a white community and then opening a satellite center there.

MARIN CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representative: Kate McClain
Issues Discussed: Competing with high-paying jobs, achieving greater diversity in recruitment

THE PROGRAM

The MCC, established in 1983, is a year-round, non-residential program with slots for 60 corpsmembers, ages 18-26. There are four work days and one education day each week. Members receive the minimum wage of $3.35/hour; however, they earn no pay for half of each education day.

THE PROBLEMS

1. The low pay presents serious recruiting problems. Kate McClain said kids call and say, "I'd love to do this, but I can earn five dollars an hour someplace else."

2. The MCC would like more women and minority recruits. McClain noted that she once placed an advertisement that was specifically aimed at women but did not state the age restrictions. She got lots of calls from women in their late 20s, 30s and 40s who said they wanted to stop being secretaries and were willing to work for $3.35 an hour so they could retrain themselves. McClain couldn't accept them, but, she said, it piqued her interest.

THE POSSIBILITIES

1. One suggestion was to explore ways to increase the hourly pay, perhaps by cutting out benefits and putting the funds into corpsmembers' salaries. The MCC is not a residential program and, said McClain, "People are trying to pay for rent and food."

   Another approach mentioned was to try to "sell" what the corps has to offer in addition to wages. Enos Flores of the CCC's San Bernardino Center said he tells his recruits that a year in the corps costs the state of California $18,000, and that's what a year at Stanford University would cost. He emphasized that, in addition to the minimum wage, corpsmembers are receiving health benefits, paid vacations and holidays, skills training, leadership training, and additional cash or a scholarship when they complete their year's service. While other corps might not have all of that to offer, they can use a similar approach with recruits.

   Flores also suggested that the MCC emphasize the service aspect of its program: Marin has an unusually beautiful

environment and people want to keep it that way. He raised the idea of establishing internships with local agencies that administer park land; members could become eligible for these internships after four or six months in the corps. McClain liked the idea of internships because, she noted, "That will make the minimum wage more palatable."

2. According to McClain, the MCC is considering expanding "across the bridge" to include the town of Richmond in the next county. This should help attract more minority recruits. The corps is also talking about eventually adding a residential program. That addition would be costly but would obviously help recruitment.

   For other suggestions about adding diversity to the corps and increasing the number of women, see the discussions in "Some Strategies for Recruitment" and the section on the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps.

MARYLAND CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representatives: Linda Kight and Lonnie Penny
Issues Discussed: Serving disadvantaged youth

THE PROGRAM

This non-residential program is funded to serve up to 800 disadvantaged youth, ages 14 to 21 each summer. Approximately 75 percent of its funds come from JTPA and, thus, can be used only for these youth. Its projects are restricted to those that help restore the Chesapeake Bay.

THE PROBLEM

The Maryland corps has trouble attracting enough disadvantaged youth to operate at capacity. In 1986, the corps had about 645 members, down from "the high 700s" in the previous summer.

MCC recruitment emphasizes the program's focus on "environmental educational awareness" and points out that service in the corps can lead to careers with the state's Department of Natural Resources. This approach is effective with non-disadvantaged youth but, says Linda Kight, pay seems to be more of an issue with disadvantaged youth. They need money, and they can earn more at McDonald's. Unlike some of the year-round programs, the MCC offers few benefits along with wages.

THE POSSIBILITIES

The group's discussion focused on other methods of attracting disadvantaged youth. Currently, other groups like the Private Industry Council do much of the recruitment for the summer corps. LACC's Mamusu Tinson emphasized that the MCC should be in total control of its recruitment so it can create a consistent image of the corps and sell the program on its strengths.

Other suggestions included:

- San Bernadino's Enos Flores suggested that a staff member and a potential applicant together work out the pros and cons of joining the Maryland corps. The staff member can take a sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle. On one side, the recruiter and applicant can list the advantages and disadvantages of the private sector job (higher pay, perhaps some control over hours worked, boring work, no skills development, etc.) On the other side, they can list parallel characteristics of the youth corps (lower pay, rigid hours, outdoor work, job training, service, etc.) The youth can then make an informed decision

based on the information s/he has helped develop. Recruiters should emphasize the training and development their program offers to youth: it is not just another summer job.

- Does the MCC provide letters of reference for youth who successfully complete the program? Kate McClain of the Marin Conservation Corps thinks the promise of recommendations can be a useful recruiting tool if the youth understand the importance of good references when they begin looking for full-time jobs.

- Does the program have a formal educational component? If not, the corps might consider adding classes in, for example, reading and math remediation and employability training. Look into the possibility of obtaining high school credits for youth who complete the program. According to McClain, the Marin corps has this kind of arrangement.

WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CORPS

Workshop Representative: Dave Chesky
Issues Discussed: Recruiting urban youth corps and crewleaders

THE PROGRAM

Begun in 1983, the WCC has slots for 250 members, ages 18 to 25. Recruits, including crew leaders, must be unemployed. The corps is decentralized: project sponsors make the initial efforts to recruit members for their crews.

THE PROBLEMS

1. Recruiting people in certain sections of the state is troublesome, particularly in heavily populated areas like Milwaukee. Dave Chesky said that the $3.35/hour pay might be part of the problem.

2. There are problems recruiting crew leaders, whose pay starts at $6.00/hour.

3. They would like to recruit more women. Currently, about 30 percent of the members are female.

THE POSSIBILITIES

1. Ray Burkhart, coordinator of the A-Team, said he has stopped using "generic" classified ads and begun using more targeted ones. Since his program focuses on construction work, he places ads that say "Construction, entry level, will train," and includes his phone number. The WCC could use this approach with ads listed under "Conservation" or "Landscaping," for example. Burkhart also suggested paying a little extra to have a border printed around the ads because it helps attract attention to them.

   In general, participants felt that the Wisconsin corps has to beef up its promotional materials. They don't, for example, have a flyer. For more complete suggestions, see "Some Strategies for Recruitment."

2. The group suggested that, to attract crew leaders, Wisconsin make the program known to people who might be thinking about changing jobs. This could include people currently working in probation offices, counseling agencies, physical education departments and technical colleges. The National Association of Service and Conservation Corps has a job bank that the WCC should use. Peg Rosenberry, of the Human Environment Center, said that job announcements could be sent to her for distribution around the country. Rosenberry noted that "crew leader types" are fairly

mobile: it's not impossible to recruit people from other states.

3. See the discussion in "Some Strategies for Recruitment" and the section on the Vermont Conservation Corps.

THE A-TEAM

Workshop Representative: Ray Burkhart
Issues Discussed: Competition from higher-paying jobs, transportation to rural work sites

THE PROGRAM

This small, non-residential, three-month program is located in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. Its purpose is to prepare youth for private sector jobs as quickly as possible, and, thus, it is fast paced and highly disciplined. The A-Team is a targeted program: all funds come from JTPA. Members' pay was recently raised to $4/hour from $3.35/hour. The program focuses on training for jobs in construction; the educational component deals mainly with employability skills. The recruits' average stay is about two months, and there were only 10 corpsmembers in the program as of October 1986.

THE PROBLEMS

1. Anne Arundel County is enjoying economic prosperity. The unemployment rate is at 2 percent, and there are so many construction jobs available that companies are training youth for $6/hour. In addition, because the corps' program is so brief, there is constant turnover. The A-Team recently began offering incentive rewards (like new tools) to corpsmembers or former corpsmembers who bring in new recruits.

2. Anne Arundel is a large county with both a significant metropolitan area and much rural space. There is little public transportation. The youth that the program would attract do not have the money to own cars. Transportation problems -- getting the youth from their homes to work sites -- hurt recruiting efforts.

THE POSSIBILITIES

1. Group members suggested that the A-Team identify the pockets of poverty in the county and focus recruitment efforts there. The corps can also recruit women more actively. Ray Burkhart is thinking about raising the upper age limit for recruits though he worries about attracting people who are chronically unemployed and might use the program just to earn some money for a few months.

   Since private construction companies are offering training, the corps might consider shifting its job focus. Burkhart noted that he is considering a shift to maintenance work, particularly because the construction boom will eventually

end and people will be needed to maintain all the new buildings.

2. Participants asked if the transportation problem could be solved by having a five-day-a-week residential program. This would obviously be expensive. In addition, Burkhart explained that an important goal of the program is to provide a "real" work atmosphere, which means dealing with problems at home as well as at work. A controlled environment residential center would defeat that purpose.

   Similarly, Burkhart thinks that, to a certain extent, it is important for members to have to deal with the transportation problems they will have to face when working in the private sector. Nevertheless, he recently introduced a pick-up point in one of the areas from which the A-Team draws recruits -- though corpsmembers still have difficulty even getting to feeder points. Workshop participants, however, felt that the only solution was to establish more staging areas where vans could pick up corpsmembers in the morning and drop them off after work.

V. CONCLUSIONS

> **"Instead of struggling every year as our goals increase, I'd like to develop a concrete plan for recruitment that will work now and down the road."**
>
> **Tom Hark, Vermont Youth Conservation Corp**
>
> **"If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there."**
>
> **An Old Saying**

Workshop participants shared dozens of ideas for dealing with specific areas of recruitment. The best of these ideas often made so much sense that one could imagine others wondering "why didn't I think of that?" But the real value of this workshop wasn't just the laundry list of practical solutions to an ever shifting set of recruitment problems. What emerged are a few down-to-earth principles that are prerequisite to a comprehensive recruitment plan. These principles are perhaps best re-stated as a series of questions that taken together comprise a basic, no-frills guide for recruitment success "...that will work now and down the road."

Based on recommendations that emerged from participants during the workshop, such a plan would include the following sections:

1. A mission statement. What are the corps' goals? Who are the youth it is serving? Does the enabling legislation affect recruitment possibilities? Are specific goals stated as to corpsmember composition? What are the social value goals of the program (fostering tolerance and cooperation, etc.) and how do they affect recruitment?

   Ask any veteran corps leader and without exception he/she will stress its importance about mission statements to all aspects of corps activity, not least of all the activity of recruitment.

   The mission statements of most corps reflect an important and useful duality: work production and youth employability are given double billing.

   A corps' mission needs to be made known throughout the organization to youth, staff, boards of directors and other governing entities, and the community at large. Any of these groups can too easily reinterpret or misinterpret a

they are not stated clearly and often and reinforced consistently. This has a very real affect on recruitment over time.

2. Program design. How is the program constructed to meet its goals? How will the program design determine the kinds of people who might be interested in becoming corpsmembers?

   For example, an urban corps might attract women to an opportunity for training in non-traditional skills, but single mothers are unlikely to enter a residential program. Educational incentives show promise in attracting a diverse group of recruits.

   Program design must be taken into account in analyzing recruitment, and program design may also be adjusted (without violating the original mission) to enhance recruitment.

3. Specific strategies for attracting recruits. What contacts does the corps have with community organizations? Where and how often does it give presentations? How is it using the media? What kinds of promotional material does it prepare? Are current corpsmembers or alumni used to recruit? Are special groups, neighborhoods targeted? (The possibilities for specific strategies seem limited only by recruiters' imaginations.)

4. Point of entry. How much pre-screening is done? Does the first staff member a recruit meets set an appropriate tone? How effective is the training program? Does it contribute to attrition?

5. The corps experience. Why do people drop out? There will probably always be fairly substantial attrition rates, but could changes help lower the rates?

The questions are brief, but the answers will be complex. Every aspect of a corps' program helps determine the kinds of recruitment problems it will face and the strategies it can use to solve those problems.

In seeking answers to these questions, it may be helpful to refer to the workshop proceedings for leads on how other programs attempted to answer them. Attached here is a participant list complete with phone numbers and addresses. These individuals have already expressed their willingness to share information with you. Or call the Youth Corps Exchange Project at P/PV for suggestions about sources of information on a specific problem or point of interest.

Many good, specific ideas came up during the workshop. But the process of discovery neither began nor ended there. Next year there will be more ideas tactics and gimmicks that will work for awhile and then fade in their novelty and usefulness. This is

there will be more ideas, tactics and gimmicks that will work for awhile and then fade in their novelty and usefulness. This is the creative challenge -- to see recruitment not just as a one-time affair but to constantly replenish a recruitment program with strategies consistent with a thorough understanding of the mission and experience of your youth conservation/service corps.

YOUTH CORPS EXCHANGE PROJECT

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